



Politeness and Women Communication Practices in Groups' Dynamics of Anglophone Cameroon Women Associations

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Abstract— This study set out to explore politeness use during interactions in women associations from the South West and North West Regions of Cameroon in order to reveal their functions in groups' dynamics. The study employed a qualitative collective case study design, blended with Brown and Levinson's (1987) Face-Saving Politeness Theory and Bales' (1957; 1999) IPA framework to explore politeness use and its functions in two categories of predominantly women associations, comprising Biwon Self Reliance and Farmers and Traders' Union (BSRFTU), Cameroon Gatsby Foundation (CGF), One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle (OHCTB)- Development-Based associations, Catholic Women's Association (CWA) and Christian Women Fellowship (CWF)—Faith-Based associations. Through purposeful and random sampling techniques and with unstructured-open-ended interviews, non-participant observation and audio-recordings, 24 events which ranged from 24 minutes to 7 hours were analysed through the latent content analysis. The findings show that in an attempt to mitigate the intensity of the 'face damages' of communicative acts in the realisation of the problem-solving procedure of questions, attempted answers, negative reactions and positive reactions during meeting deliberations, members of BSRFTU, CGF, CWA, CWF and OCTB hedge them with politeness strategies. A total of 6,599 strategies of politeness accompanied thought units during interactions in these women associations. 4,796 of these politeness strategies, that is 72.7% were expressed in faith-based events and 1,803 of them, a percentage of 27.3, were used in development-based events. Of the five super strategies of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), positive politeness (PP) was the most frequently employed super strategy in the activities of these women associations. It recorded an overall percentage of 70.3; that is 4,641 strategies used, with 3541 strategies (73.8%) used in faith-based associations and 1100 strategies (60%) used in development-based associations. However, while off record politeness was also preferred in development-based associations' events, negative politeness and bald on record were higher in faith-based associations. Don't Do the FTA was very minimal in the two categories of associations. The majority of these politeness strategies accompanied attempted answers thought units- 2,293 strategies, that is 34.7%. 1,942 strategies, that is 29.4% accompanied positive reactions thought units, and 1,410 strategies (21.4%) were used during negative reactions thought units. This use of politeness demonstrates that communication for members of these women groups does not only revolve around discussing issues. It also entails connecting with one another. This use of politeness during group's events in Anglophone Cameroon women associations' interactions reveals significant traits of women's interaction ethics: the use of collaborative and cooperative talk to create and maintain relationships, the avoidance of criticisms or making it gentle if it could not be avoided, the avoidance of outdoing others, or putting others down, and the tendency of paying attention to others and to relationships.



Keyword— *Politeness, Communication Practices, Groups' Dynamics, Anglophone Cameroon, Women Associations*

I. INTRODUCTION

The human personality is a sacred thing; one dare not violate it nor infringe its bounds, while at the same time, the greatest good is in communion with others, (Durkheim, 1915, as cite in Brown and Levinson, 1987).

This declaration by Durkheim is an indication that communing is an integral aspect of human existence, and a smooth flow of this is imperative. This is particularly important to women who have had an extended history of marginalisation and struggle for recognition (Bih, 2014; Fondze, 2012; Kah, 2012, Kassea, 2006; National Institute of Statistics, 2024; Nchi, 2018). It is therefore vital that they appease one another, even in their language use during gatherings.

The desire by women to bond in order to stand against their being dominated and marginalised and to seek for greater social, economic and political involvement in matters of the state and those that concern their welfare, has been existing for centuries. In Britain, for instance, in the year 1777, Abigail Adams, the wife of a member of the Continental Congress, cautioned her husband, John, not to "put such unlimited power in the hands of the husbands", attesting that "all men would be tyrants if they could," and that if care and attention is not paid to women, they are "determined to foment a rebellion and will not hold themselves bound by any laws in which they have no voice and representation" (Halsey & Johnson, 1988, p.562).

In line with this, and also in response to the Revolutionary French Declaration of the Rights of Man, a French woman by name Mary Wollstonecraft, in 1792, wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, a book that is considered one of the first major feminist tract, (Yinyui, 2011). This book drew women's attention to the necessity of having a good education, empowering themselves and supporting each other so as to jointly fight for their rights. Many women movements and associations were formed thereon, although most of them were geared towards fighting for women's suffrage.

In Africa, the advent of colonisation encouraged policies which promoted the eradication of female emancipation, thereby reinforcing the prevention of African women's participation in the welfare of her country (Kassea, 2006). This resulted to the abolition of the dual-system of leadership built on the religious beliefs of gods and goddesses that had been in place in most African cultures, prior to colonisation (Kasea, 2006, Kah, 2012). This situation further deteriorated after the acquisition of

independence by most African countries, as men who had always been favoured by the white colonial masters, were once again given the baton of control, with women being at their mercies, forcing women to look for avenues to commune so as to overcome these challenges.

In Cameroon, before the advent of the 21st century, the situation was not different. Women's contribution to development was pushed to care-giving and household activities, with few exceptions from certain cultures such as the Laimbwe's in the North West region, where women, as did their male counterparts, were particularly influential in all domains of life, especially in the socio-economic sector, as evident in the activities of the Elderly Women Society (Kefa'a) and of the Women's Association and Clubs (Zhiamehzele), (Kah, 2012). Also, the economic crisis that hit Cameroon in the 1980s and which still has an effect today, further worsened the situation by bringing more hardship thereby forcing Cameroonian women to the forefront of decision-making in some households and beyond. Ironically, these circumstances increased their freedom to participate in income generating activities in order to careter for themselves and their families. To empower themselves, some of these women formed groups and associations, thereby increasing the range of women groups and associations from being solely religious and traditional female cults to those with developmental purposes. These women associations and groups abound today, serving as vital sanctuaries for economic empowerment, spiritual growth, and social cohesion, although most of them are not officially registered.

In order to navigate a patriarchal society that often marginalizes their voices (Bih, 2014; Kassea, 2006, Kah, 2012, Fondze, 2012), members of these associations have developed unique interactional codes within these groups. While the "what" of these interactions (Speech Acts) and the "how" of their cooperation (Gricean Maxims) have been documented (Ewane et al, 2022, 2025), the specific linguistic and paralinguistic strategies used to manage relationships, reputation, and dignity (Politeness) require distinct analysis, giving that the preservation of one another's face and construction of relationship is paramount to these women in their gatherings. In the context of some selected women associations from the South West and North West regions, specifically, Catholic Women's Association (CWA), Christian Women Fellowship (CWF), Cameroon Gatsby Foundation (CGF), Biwon Self-Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union (BSRFTU) and One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle (OHCTB), and with the aid of Brown

and Levinson's (1987) Face-Saving Politeness model and Bales' (1957; 1999) Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) Framework, this study diverges from previous studies by exploring the linguistic and paralinguistic strategies that the members of these women associations adopt to show consideration for one another's feeling (Politeness) during groups' dynamics. The study posits that the high frequency of specific conversational rules that prevail in Anglophone Cameroon women's interactions is not merely a reflection of social etiquette, but a strategic tool for "camouflaging" authority (Christie, 2000) and maintaining the delicate balance between task accomplishment (fundraising, loans, spiritual directives) and social cohesion. Brown and Levinson recommend that discovering these principles of language usage may be largely coincident with discovering the principles out of which social relationships, in their interactional aspects are constructed, (1987, p.55). This study aims to demonstrate how this obtains in Anglophone Cameroon women interactions.

1.1 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The present study set out to explore politeness use during interactions in women associations from the South West and North West regions of Cameroon in order to reveal their functions in groups' dynamics of Anglophone Cameroon women.

The objectives guiding the study are:

1. To critically examine politeness' use during interactions in women associations from the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon.
2. To explore the extent to which politeness use function to reveal communication practices and interaction patterns of Anglophone Cameroon women (North West and South West).
3. To reveal the commonalities and differences in politeness use in these women associations.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 On Politeness

One of the works that lends credit to this study is Takam's (2008) study titled 'Do Cameroonian Women always speak a more refined language than men?' With the aid of Brown and Levinson's (2010) face-saving politeness model, Takam examined speech of female Cameroonians and sentences from Calixthe Beyala's novels *Femme nue femme noire* (2003) and *Assèze l'Africaine* (2001) revealing that Cameroonian women are fast becoming impolite. This is evidenced in their use of vulgar language; a notion that is contrary to the well-known assertion that women are more polite than men. Utterances such as "Close your mouth

when you are eating, you ill-bred child" (said by a mother to her son during a social gathering), Va-t-en de là, laid type" (Get out of there, you ugly bloke) said by a young lady to a man she was apparently meeting for the first time, and who was trying to snatch a few minutes' conversation, "Putain! Hurla maman saluad! Fils d' enculé! Ordure! Pourriture! Comment a-t-il osé me faire un coup pariel" ("Bloody hell! mum roars. "Swine! Dickhead's son! Bastard! Louse! How has he got the guts to do this to me?") (Beyala, 2001, as cited in Takam, 2008, p.42); insults poured out by a female character who received a warrant of arrest from a rich man named Awono, her former husband, for the refund of the money he paid for her dowry 13 years earlier, and "Ça vous travaille, hein, bondes d'hypocrites! Vous cachez vos femmes derrière des voiles pour mieux les assujettir! Espèces de vicelords! Assassins! Enculés de donneurs de leçons!" (It's really bothering you, eh? Pack of hypocrites! You veil your wives to better subjugate them! You lechers! Murderers! Fucking sermonizers!) (Beyala, 2003, p. 33-34 as cited in Takam, 2008, p. 77-78). Takam attributes this use of vulgar language by Cameroonian women to the circumstances women find themselves in, given that they are always battling with men and struggling to defend themselves from men who constantly attack them even in public. He thus argues that asserting that women most often speak a more polite and more refined language than men could be misleading if the context and the circumstances in which such language spoken is not taken into consideration. He concludes by asserting that although it is true in relative terms, that women are more polite than men, circumstances abound where women's language could be "powerful, uncooperative, aggressive, uncouth, insulting thereby face threatening," (Takam, 2008, p. 80). He postulates as does Cameron (2005), Christie (2000), Crawford (1995), Holmes (1995), Mills (2003), and Mullany (2002) that it is important to contextualise politeness, and to rethink gender and politeness in its context, taking into account all the possible circumstances that may influence a speech act.

This context-dependent approach to language analysis is in conformity with Holmes' assertion that the relationship between sex, politeness and language is a complex one and that while research shows that overall, women are more polite than men, it also depends on what we mean by 'polite' as well as which women and men are being compared and what setting or community of practice the interaction occurs in, (Holmes, 1995 as cited in Mills, 2003). This context-dependent approach to language analysis is also in conformity with Hawisher and Selfe (2000); Paltidge (2010), Ewane, (2012) and Eric (2014) who also opine that sex differences in politeness use is complex and therefore, vary with context and culture, amongst other factors. How

this assertion applies to groups gatherings of predominantly female faith-based and female development-based association's activities from the Anglophone regions of Cameroon remains one of the main objectives of this study.

In a related study titled 'Politeness strategies in the ghómala-culture and language', Mba (2008) demonstrates how despite the fact that modernism and contact with the western culture seems to have affected the use of politeness in the ghómala culture and language; an indigenous language from the Western Region of Cameroon, specific traditional indicators of politeness remain unchanged. This includes naming strategies, pronouns usage, kinship terminologies, and the use of names in personal address and in family members' call signals. For instance, as a strategy of politeness or intention to be polite, young children in ghómala culture address parents or elderly people using the name of a son or daughter. Expressions like "the father of..." and "the mother of..." are often used to address elderly people, (Mba, 2008, p.155). The study equally reveals that women are usually much more versed in expressing these strategies of politeness when addressing their husbands, their husband's brothers and sisters, their own children, other people's children and even their fellow women of the immediate environment or from far. He attributes this high rate of women's use of more of this conversational strategy to the fact that most often, women not only take the blame for any negative attitude shown by their children in public, but society also expects them to exhibit polite attitudes due to their role as mothers bringing up younger generations.

Mba's (2008) revelation of naming strategies, pronouns' usage, the use of kinship terminologies and address forms as indicators of politeness is significant to this study, which also explores politeness use in interactions. This study therefore aims to verify if naming strategies, pronouns' usage, the use of kinship terminologies and address forms, which are indicators of politeness, and whose uses have been mastered by women in ghómala culture, are features of Anglophone Cameroon women associations interactions.

Another study that lends credit to this work is Anchimbe (2008). Anchimbe investigated the impact of naming strategies in English in Cameroon in an attempt to justify why people's personal names are usually replaced with kinship terms and how that is related to the desire to be polite, to show respect, to be close and to avoid calling names. The study reveals that address terms such as 'brother,' 'sister,' 'uncle,' 'aunt,' 'mother' and 'father', have a broader interpretation within Cameroonian culture than in Britain where the English language originated. He attributes this change to the "collision of western and indigenous culture in post-colonial eras, where these

naming terms have been re-made to either carry the mark of politeness- respect, deference and mitigation which the addressee deserves or the impoliteness- insolence and rudeness that the addressee is made to suffer," (p.111).

The study's findings also reveals that in the Cameroonian culture, as opposed to western cultures where kinship relationship is less important beyond first cousin, the choice of 'brother', 'sister', 'uncle', 'aunt', 'mother' or 'father' is done for reasons such as "closeness, deference, age, name-escapism and politeness," thereby projecting a "feeling of closeness that actually did not exist before," (p.112). Hence, these English kinship terms which do not exist explicitly in many African languages, have now been borrowed into the indigenous cultural interpretations and are re-imposed on English to refer to tribal relations, new acquaintances and older friends. To Anchimbe, because communication and interaction at certain levels, especially that of the family is normally more cordial and less familiar, the use of these close-kinship terms between persons who are not blood relatives creates and even reinforces a cordial family atmosphere, bridging gaps created by 'strangeness' between people who may be meeting for the first time. He therefore proposes as does Meier (1995) that each speech community has means to communicate deference, mitigation, directness and indirectness, and these means must not always find equivalence across languages and cultures. In the exploration of groups' interactions of some selected women associations, the present study seeks to verify if Anglophone Cameroon women also have unique means to communicate deference, mitigation, directness and indirectness. The commonalities and differences in the expression of these conversational rules in the various associations types is also an integral aspect of this study.

In another related study titled "On not calling people by their names: Pragmatic undertones of sociocultural relationships in a postcolony", Anchimbe (2011) contends that because the use of personal names in Cameroon is often considered face-threatening, particularly when addressing elders or individuals of higher status, interlocutors replace them with specific terms. This is contrary to Western Anglo-Saxon pragmatics, where the use of a first name often signals positive politeness and a desire to be liked and to reduce social distance. The study reveals that terms such 'manyi' (Mother of twins), 'tanyi' (father of twins), 'moyo' (in-law, specifically male), 'mbanya' (co-wife in a polygamous marriage), 'mbombo' (namesake) function as "honorifics of achievement" or "relational markers." Hence, being addressed as 'Tanyi' or 'Manyi' elevates the recipient's social status, giving that parenting twins is culturally viewed as a special blessing or burden that commands respect. Similarly, the term 'Mbanya' (co-wife), while potentially a source of rivalry, is used vocatively to

maintain domestic harmony and acknowledgement of a shared destiny, (Anchimbe, 2011, p.1477). According to Anchimbe, these name avoidance serves the pragmatic functions of deferential politeness (acknowledging hierarchy- age and status), social endearment (fostering intimacy without the "rudeness" of using a bare name) and cultural preservation (maintaining indigenous kinship structures even when speaking English or French); all of these highlighting how indigenous cultural norms hybridize with colonial languages to create unique communicative systems. He further asserts that these name-avoidance is not just a temporary form of situational indirectness but rather an important social interactional facet of the Cameroonian community. That, although these norms are unwritten, they are observed by members of the society. He advises that understanding how they function requires in depth analyses, preferably with naturally occurring data, of speakers' verbal and non-verbal interaction in specific settings, in their daily activities. That is the purpose of this work that analyses naturally occurring data from groups' interactions of women associations from the South and North West Regions in order to bring out the politeness strategies that accompany utterances, signs and symbols. The commonalities and differences in the expression of these conversational rules in the various associations types is also an integral aspect of this study.

Echu (2008) examined the contribution of forms of address in rendering communication polite, revealing as did Anchimbe (2008; 2011) that like many other African indigenous languages, kinship terms are used in Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE) not only to express kinship relationships but also to reduce the distance between people who do not even know each other. Thus, the use of address forms such as 'sah', 'massa', 'mista', 'chif', 'madam', 'sita', 'broda', which can be traced from English Language, and 'Ni', 'Mbe', 'Oga', 'Manyi', 'Tanyi', with traces from various indigenous languages, are clearly polite forms of address used in addressing persons who are superior in social status to the speaker, (Echu, 2008, p.124). The study also reveals that whenever a speaker identifies himself or herself culturally with the addressee, there is the tendency of using forms of address like 'Ni', 'Mbe', 'Sango', 'Mola' and 'Amueh' which are culturally marked address forms. On the contrary, when the speaker and addressee share different ethnic identities or when the identity of the addressee is unknown, more loose forms of address that do not identify the addressee's ethnic origin such as 'pah', 'massa', 'chif', are preferred.

The data equally reveals that the use of specific forms of address such as 'amueh', 'asso', 'boh', 'chick', 'complice', 'kombi', 'massa', 'mbanya', 'mbombo', 'sita', 'broda', 'njumba', and 'nkwane', which encourage feelings of

camaraderie, are motivated by factors such as group solidarity, friendship and common interests, Christian denomination or belonging to the same fellowship group, and militants or sympathisers of the same political party. He therefore, asserts as does Anchimbe (2008, 2011) and Mba (2008) that kinship terms do not only bring interactions closer to addressee and speaker in terms of distance, but are also used by interlocutors to express politeness. According to Ewane (2008), a combination of French, Bantu and English words such 'le big', 'on se meet', 'repé', 'remé', 'grand copo', 'le man', 'associé(e)', 'on se see', 'teacher', 'maa'mi', 'laisse-moi, non?' 'Comment non?', 'je back', 'tonton', 'je go (nang)', 'ça-va? Tata', 'forget', 'give moi', 'la mouna', 'assia', 'gracias', "assos"; which make up a cultural hybrid of unique politeness collection from Cameroon, have also become a characteristic feature of the speech style of students in Cameroonian universities (p.57-59). The present study comes in investigating if these specific forms of address and kinship terms which are characteristic features of Cameroonian verbal interactions are used by members of women associations from the South West and North West regions of Cameroon.

Another study that informs the preset study is Chiato and Lando (2021). Chiato and Lando (2021) utilized a qualitative design, drawing data from public conversations to carry out a sociopragmatic analysis of selected menstrual euphemisms that girls and women in Cameroon employ when making reference to menstruation in public conversations. The findings reveal that girls and women in the Anglophone regions use euphemisms to talk about menstruation. To Chiato and Lando, these euphemisms are not merely substitutions but cognitive filters that transform distasteful realities into socially acceptable metaphors. The data reveals that as opposed to Western euphemisms which often focus on "hygiene" or "sanitization" (Sveen, 2016), girls and women's use of euphemism in Cameroon indicate a rich metaphorical diversity classified under 10 semantic domains of visitation, periodicity, royalty, fertility/productivity, friendship, indisposition, discomfort of woman sickness and illness, compensation, obligation/reward, and colour. These terms function primarily as solidarity markers. By using coded language therefore, these girls/women create a community of practice that excludes males and children, thereby protecting the sanctity of the female experience while adhering to public decency laws.

Among the studies on politeness carried out in the school milieu in Cameroon is Ewane (2012). This study, which employed Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness principle to investigate the politeness strategies teachers and students of secondary schools employ during English Language lessons revealed that politeness use during

lessons in English language varies. Whereas much of positive politeness strategies accompany teacher-talk, especially when addressing students, students make use of more of negative and off record politeness strategies. Precisely, when interacting with senior students and teachers, they employ negative and off record politeness strategies. On the contrary, when addressing peers and classmates, more of positive politeness strategies are used. The study also revealed that gestures and signs accompany students' use of linguistics politeness during lessons. In the same line, Eric (2014), who also employed Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness principle to explore the politeness strategies used in print media interviews of English expression in Cameroon by male/female interviewers and interviewees, revealed that the male and female interviewers and interviewees apply politeness strategies in their interviews. However, the men frequently used more politeness strategies than the women in attempt to avoid or minimize threatening their hearer's face; revealing that the men (interviewers and interviewees) are more polite than their female counterpart. This study intends to investigate if this differences in the expression of politeness by male and female interactants obtains in women associations. This is because some of the associations, such as CGF, OHCTB and BSRFTU have male members.

2.2 On Interaction

A lot of studies have been carried out on men and women's interactions. Most of these studies focused on language use in Western cultures, indicating how these mirror gender roles, (Buikema and Smelik, 1995; Cameron, 1997; Goodwin, 1988; Holmes, 1995; Tannen, 1986; Zimmerman and West, 1975). These studies assert that the gender differences found in the linguistic strategies used by women and men reflect their socially unequal positions. That is, in the same manner that there are distinctions of what men and women do in other spheres of life, so too are there distinctions in their use of language thereby presenting two different cultures, that of the man in the one hand and that of the woman on the other. They go further asserting that while most of what men do in language use is to express their superiority, women on their own use language to express unassertiveness. The Ben Sex Role Inventory of 1974, that equated femininity with being weak, shy, soft-spoken and not using harsh language, (Christie, 2000, p. 118) came up propagating these ideas.

The above stereotypes and prescriptive affirmations on women's verbal behaviour were also echoed in works of arts as early as the 1920s. This was re-echoed in Jespersen (1922) who revealed that women have smaller vocabularies, make extensive use of certain adjectives and adverbs, and

more often than men, break-off without finishing their sentences. According to him, this way of using language by women is because "they start talking without having thought what they are going to say," (Jespersen, 1922, as cited in Sunderland, 2006, p. 5). In a similar manner, Trudgill (1972) investigated the use of the variable (-ing) for which there are two pronunciations in the Norwick English. The findings revealed that while the less prestigious form (-in) was used more by men, the more prestigious (-ing) form was used more by women, (Trudgill, 1972 as cited in Sunderland, 2006, p. 9).

Equally, Lakoff (1975) in her proposition of what she calls women's language, re-echoed these stereotypes. She maintains that overtly polite forms such as the constant use of question tags, rising intonation, the avoidance of expletives, the greater use of diminutives and euphemisms, the use of more hedges and mitigating devices and more indirectness, coupled with vocabulary items such as 'adorable,' 'charming,' and 'sweet', render women's language tentative, thereby complementing trivializing terms used on them in most cultures, (Lakoff, 1975, as cited in Sunderland 2006, p. 13). Paltridge (2010) maintains that these tentativeness in women's language use equally works to keep women in their place in society.

One study that has contributed in bringing to lime light issues on men and women conversational strategies is Maltz and Borker (1982). Maltz and Borker examined young children in recreation activities, discerning that while boys' activities, which usually involve fairly large groups of at least nine individuals were competitive, had clear goals and were organised by rules and roles that specify who does what and how to play, girls in their activities tend to play in pairs or in small groups with no pre-set and clear-cut goals, rules and roles. In boys' games, an individual's status depends on standing out, being better, and often dominating other players; cultivating in them specific communicative rules which turn out to be the basic rules of communication that adult men employ. That is, the use of communication to assert ones' self and ideas, the use of talk to achieve something, the use of communication to attract and maintain an audience, and the use of communication to compete with others for the 'talk stage' so that they do not gain more attention than one, (Maltz and Borker, 1982 as cited in Gumperz, 2009, p.18).

They also observed that unlike boys' games, girls' games were not structured externally, and players had to talk among themselves to decide what they were doing and what roles they had. This lack of stipulation for the rules and roles for girls' game, according to Maltz and Borker, enable girls to cooperate and work out problems by talking, thereby cultivating in girls an interest in the process of interaction more than the product; a basic rule of communication that

adult women employ, (p.18). They include: the use of collaborative and cooperative talk to create and maintain relationships, the avoidance of criticisms and outdoing, or putting each other down, paying attention to each other and to relationships, and interpreting and responding to others feelings sensitively, (p.21).

Aries (1976) also revealed that the interpersonal styles individuals display in group interactions do not only represent their entire repertoire of behaviours, but also tend to be the ones selected to meet the social sex-role pressures in the group's situation, (p.4). Aries examined the interaction patterns and discussion contents of two all-male groups, two all-female groups and two mixed groups, ranging in size of 5 to 7 members from an undergraduate population. With the aid of the General Inquirer, she revealed that there exist differences in the characteristics of social interactions for men and women in single sex and even mixed sex groups; differences that reflect the sex role demands of conventional societies. That is to say men and women express different parts of themselves in the content and structure of their groups when interacting with members of the same sex and of the opposite sex. The findings of this study also revealed that during interactions, men both initiate and receive more interactions than women. Aries considered this a microcosm of the larger society in which it is considered appropriate for men to dominate women but not the reverse. To her, sex role pressures in most societies seemed to be operating to lead men to assume this leadership role even in mixed groups. She, therefore concludes that one of the problems that men and women face in the work group is being confined to these traditional-expressive roles. This is in conformity with Strodtbeck and Mann (1956) and Strodtbeck, James and Hawkins (1957) as cited in Mabry (1985) who declared that men emerge as role specialists characterized by task-related behaviour and attempts to assume group leadership, whereas women emerged as affect specialists characterized by yielding, and positive and negative expressive behaviour.

As stated earlier, Aries (1976), Jespersen (1922), Lakoff (1975), Maltz and Borker (1982), Paltridge (2010) and Trudgill (1972) focused on language use in Western cultures, revealing how these mirror gender roles. This study which investigates politeness use in women associations' interactions from the South West and North West regions of Cameroon seeks to find out if these stereotypes and prescriptive affirmations on women's verbal behaviour are reflected in politeness use in women interactions in postcolonial contexts.

A study on interaction that lends credit to this works is Nam, Lyons, Hwang and Kim (2009). They used Bales (1957; 1999) IPA Framework to examine Face-to-face (FTF) and

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) interactions of mixed and homogenous population, with the aim of exploring the impact of team diversity and communication modes on team interactions. After examining the communication processes and profiles of the participants, they found out that homogeneous teams evidenced greater levels of communication during team-based task than the heterogeneous teams. The homogeneous teams used more showing agreement, giving opinions, and showing tension communication patterns compared to the heterogeneous teams. With reference to groups/teams' communication modes, the FTF interaction was associated with greater levels of communication compared to the CMC interaction. The data also reveals that teams interacting using FTF communication modes evidenced more tension communication patterns characterized by greater positive socio-emotional communication, more attempted answers, more questions, and more frequent negative socio-emotional communications, (p.780). This finding, according to Nam et al, (2009) is consistent with the literature on groups' interactions which suggest that diversity, while a performing enabler in the long-term, may inhibit team processes such as team cohesiveness, (p.783).

Another study with a focus on group interaction that informs this study is Beck (2009). Beck integrated Bales' (1957) IPA framework with Scheerhorn, Geist and Teboul's (1994) communicative episodes in business meetings to examine three different meeting contexts: a breast cancer support group, a non-profit service provider organization and a city commission, in order to examine how meeting activities such as coordination and decision-making are accomplished in group interactions. The findings reveal that task and relational messages are used to accomplish meeting activities, portraying how business, public administration, and health advocacy environments are contextually created. While the city commission meetings focused on showing solidarity/seems friendly, demonstrating the importance of concerted, formal effort in boosting others in their efforts during groups' events, the non-profit meetings, on the other hand, focused on release tension/dramatizes; showing the importance of joking and the informal environment during groups' events.

As indicated above, Beck (2009) and Nam, et al (2009) employed Bales' IPA framework to examine communication strategies in Face-to-face and Computer-Mediated Communication in business meetings and organisations, revealing the communication modes used during meeting deliberations and how they are realised. This study comes in not only to bring out the communication modes (Interaction patterns) realised during meeting deliberations in women gatherings but also the politeness strategies employed to render these

communication modes non-threatening. What their uses reveals about Anglophone women interaction practices is also an integral aspect of this study.

2.3 Context

This study is set in the context of women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon (South West and North West Regions). These women associations as used in the study are organisation of women with a common purpose and a formal structure, which exhibit the features of group life that typically emerge as a collection of individuals commune to form a group. Hare (1976, as cited in Ewane et al, 2022) proposes that for a collection of individuals to be considered a group, the members of the group should be in interaction with one another, sharing common goals and sets of norms which give direction and limits to their activity. There should also be sets of roles and a network of interpersonal attraction, which serve to differentiate them from other groups. Two categories of women associations were purposefully sampled to provide data for this study. They are development-based associations which comprise Biwon Self Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union (BSRFTU), Cameroon Gatsby Foundation (CGF) and One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle (OHCTB), and faith-based associations, comprising Catholic Women's Association (CWA) and Christian Women Fellowship (CWF).

Faith-based associations, as used in this study, are groups formed by Christian women in the Catholic and Presbyterian churches, respectively. Their objectives are geared towards helping women exercise their Christian duties through fellowshiping. Development-based associations, on the other hand, are groups and associations of mostly women, which are apolitical and non-religious inclined. Their main objective is geared towards empowering members economically, so that they can meet up with the basic expenses in life. Although these women associations have diverse objectives, their main goals have been to provide members with the opportunities they need to grow economically, spiritually and materially. Charlton (1984, as in Ewane et al, 2022) had noted the importance of these women associations to the wellbeing of women in his assertion that these women associations are significant not just because they facilitate the implementation of development projects, but because they are traditionally a means for women to enhance their influence on societal issues.

2.3.1 The Catholic Women's Association (CWA).

The Catholic Women's Association, or L'Association des Femmes Catholique (L'A.F.C) - its French appellation, is an apolitical, a non-profit making and lay private association of God's faithful of the Catholic Church in

Cameroon, which is governed by canons 321-326 of the Code of Canon Law, (Catholic Women Association, Statutes and Bylaws, 2012, p.1). This association was founded in Buea, on the 4th of May 1963, by Mrs Anna Foncha, the wife of the Prime Minister of the then Southern Cameroons. Today, it is found in all the regions of Cameroon and has branches in Europe and America. It has a membership of over 20,000 women with 1,412 branches, 396 zones, and 109 divisions distributed in 23 dioceses in Cameroon, (Ewane et al, 2022, 2025). While the main language spoken in the CWA is Pidgin, Standard English is the language of interaction at the provincial and national levels of the association.

2.3.2 The Christian Women Fellowship (CWF)

The Christian Women Fellowship, which is a church group based in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, was created as a result of the activities carried out by the Basel Missionaries who brought Christianity to Cameroon in 1886, (Yinyuy, 2011, as cited in Ewane et al, 2022). The group got its vigour from intensive Bible studies, prayers and songs composed by the women themselves. It was through these gatherings that the concept of "fellowship" with its different appellations of 'Christian Women's Work', 'Women's Group' or 'Ndola Bito' which in Duala means "the love of women", developed among the women, (Yinyuy 2011, as cited in Ewane *et al.*, 2022, p. 70). As is obtained in CWA, so too is it in CWF, as the main language of communication is Pidgin, although Standard English is allowed. However, in areas where members are uneducated, the local languages are the means of interaction during meetings and gatherings, (G. Besong, personal communication, April 16, 2016). The CWF in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon has a membership of 17,455, in 16 presbyteries, with 287 congregational groups in 64 zones, (Ewane et al, 2022).

2.3.3 One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle (OHCTB)

One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle is a Common Initiative Group (CIG). It is composed of 45 members; 42 women and three men, with the men playing the function of patrons. OHCTB is situated in Owe-Muyuka, in Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. This association that started as a 'njangi' group, where members went to work in farms of individual group members on a rotational basis, was founded in 1994. The aim was that if all the members come as a group to work in one member's farm, the surface area of work done will be more than that of an individual who worked alone. With this objective, the association was created and given the name "One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle", (R. Che, personal communication, October 12, 2015). OHCTB is composed of a merger of women from many indigenous tribes of Cameroon: Bakossi, Bameta,

Bangwa, Bamingi, Bakweri, Barondo, Ewondo, Bayangi and Bamileki. Due to the fact that most of the members are illiterates, and given the composition of the group, Pidgin remains the main language spoken during group activities, (Ewane et al, 2025).

2.3.4 Cameroon Gatsby Foundation (CGF)

Cameroon Gatsby Foundation is an assemblage of groups made up of women, registered under a Charitable Trusts set up and supported financially by the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trust in the UK. Its main mission has been to assist less privileged people, especially women, by giving them loans with low interest rates. Because CGF groups are made up of representatives of associations (the presidents, the secretaries and financial secretaries of each of the member groups), they are coordinated by field coordinators- employed individuals paid by the foundation, (Ewane et al, 2022). These field coordinators help supervise and coordinate the activities of various groups which are under their jurisdiction. Also, because most members of CGF are farmers and business women, Pidgin is the main language spoken during group activities. Three of the foundation's associations: Muyuka, Buea and Bamenda have provided data for this study.

2.3.5 Biwon Self-Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union (BSRFTU)

Biwon Self-Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union is an association of mostly female traders and farmers located in Mankon, Bamenda, in the North West Region of Cameroon. It has 28 members, comprising 6 men and 22 women. This association was created when a group of women observed that it was only by forming an association that financial and material assistance could be obtained from government agencies and non-governmental organisations. The term "biwon", a word from Lamnso; an indigenous language spoken in the North West Region of Cameroon, which means 'because of children', was chosen as the name of the association, (Ewane et al, 2022, p. 70). The name also serves as a reminder to members of the call by nature to every mother to do whatever it takes to bring up a child. Pidgin is also the language of communication during meeting sessions in BSRFTU.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative collective case study design (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005) to explore politeness use and its functions in groups' dynamics within women associations. This design was selected to allow for a comparative analysis across two distinct organisational frameworks: faith-based associations and development-

based associations. By examining the different realisations and expressions of politeness in the various associations, the study aimed to build a comprehensive understanding of how politeness strategies and face-work are realized and function in communicative practices in predominantly female spaces.

The study was conducted in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon, the country's two primary Anglophone regions. The target population comprises members of six purposively selected associations, representing a total membership of 30,152 (30,083 females and 69 males).

The random and purposeful sampling techniques were used to select this population- development-based and faith-based women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon. While the random sampling technique was used to select the towns in these two regions where data was collected, that is Kumba from Meme Division Muyuka, Buea and Limbe from Fako Division, (South West) and Kumbo from Bui Division, Ntambeng, Bamenda, and Mankon from Mezam (North West), the maximum variation and critical case sampling techniques were used to select the faith-based and development-based associations whose groups' activities provided data for the study. Because the maximum variation sampling technique enables the selection of cases "with markedly different forms of the same experience of the same aspects" (Dörnyei, 2011, p.132), it gave us the opportunity to explore the variations and commonalities in politeness use in the two categories of women associations. Furthermore, the critical case sampling technique was used to choose the study's area; the two Anglophone Regions in Cameroon- the North West and South West Regions. This is because the main language of communication in these two regions is English Language and Pidgin. Also, membership in these sampled associations cuts across tribes and regions, as women doing business and living in these localities and those working there are members of these associations.

The data was gathered through non-participant observation, open-ended-unstructured interviews and audio recording. 24 groups' events were purposefully selected for analysis. Because we were dealing with transcripts which involved the identification and counting of instances of politeness strategies' use in the context of women associations' gatherings, we employed the latent content analysis to analyse the data. This is because we did not only focus on identifying the various politeness strategies, also, the resulting communicative practices and the interaction patterns created in the process of using this conversational rule were equally considered. The data passed through the following latent content process:

- (i) Transcribing the data
- (ii) Pre-coding and coding,
- (iii) Growing ideas and interpreting the data
- (iv) Relating the data to theories and conclusions

Firstly, with the help of Dr Mbonwuh Hans Fonka, a linguist specialised in Cameroon Pidgin, of the Department of English, of the University of Bamenda, the recorded audios were listened to and transformed into textual forms through broad-based transcriptions. This is because most of these women interacted more using Pidgin. Secondly, the linguistic and paralinguistic tactics employed by meeting members to mitigate the face-damage of these utterances and communicative acts were identified using Brown and Levinson's 1987 face-saving politeness model. Also,

written documents and pictures of these meetings were reviewed and studied, and the strategies of politeness used in their expression were identified still with the use of Brown and Levinson's (1987) face-saving politeness model. Thirdly, tables were created thereafter, with these utterances, signs and gestures which were expressed with politeness strategies during each of the meetings. Fourthly, the variations and similarities in politeness use were classified and documented in line with the association types. Lastly, the interaction roles of these communicative acts expressed with politeness strategies were assigned using of Bales' (1957, 1999) IPA Framework. Tables 1, 2 and 3 present these sampled associations, their composition, observed meetings, and their durations.

Table 1: Association Categories and Membership

S/N	Category	Association Type	Total Number of Members	Female	Male
1	Faith-Based Associations	CWA, Ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda	11,744	11,744	0
		CWF, South West	7,455	7,455	0
		CWF, North West	10,000	10,000	0
2	Development-Based Associations	One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle (OHCTB)	45	41	4
		Cameroon Gatsby Foundation (CGF) North West Sector	413	375	38
		Cameroon Gatsby Foundation (CGF) Fako Sector	467	446	21
		Biwon Self Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union	28	22	6
Total	2	6	30,152	30,083	69

Table 1 displays the various associations and their membership, the population of this study. All the six associations are based in the Anglophone Region of Cameroon. Membership in these sampled associations, especially those of CWF, CWA, CGF and OHCTB cut across tribes and regions. This is because women doing business and living in these localities and those working there are members of these associations.

As table 1 shows, a total number of 30,152 members made up the population of this study. 30,083 of them are females and 69 of them are males. Of this total number, 11,744 are from CWA Our Lady of Grace, Ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda. CWA Our Lady of Grace, Ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda comprises all the members of CWA of the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. CWF South West has a total population of 7,455 members and CWF North West has a population of 10,000 members. For development-based associations, OHCTB has a

membership of 45, with four of them being males and 41 females. BSRFTU has 28 members; 22 females and 6 males. For Cameroon Gatsby Foundation groups, CGF Fako Sector has a total population of 467 members. 21 of them are males and 446 of them are females. Lastly, CGF North West has 413 members with 38 of them being males and 375 being females. Table 2 presents the total number of events sampled for analysis for each of these associations

As tables 2 and indicate, meetings, rallies, congresses and retreats organised in 6 associations from the South West and North West Regions of Cameroon were observed and recorded. 24 out of about 60 observed events were purposively selected to provide data for this study, giving a total percentage of 40%. The duration of these sampled events is 58 hours, 17 minutes, 5 seconds. These ranged from 24 minutes to 7 hours. Details of these recorded events and their codes have been presented in table 3.

Table 2: Association Categories and Number of Events

<i>No</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Association Type</i>	<i>Number of Events</i>
1	Faith-Based Associations	Catholic Women Association (CWA)	06
		Christian Women Fellowship (CWF)	06
2	Development-Based Associations	One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle	03
		Cameroon Gatsby Foundation, North West Sector	03
		Cameroon Gatsby Foundation, Fako Sector	03
		Biwon Self Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union	03
Total	2	6	24

Table 3: Observed Events

No	Association type and Code		Observed Meeting	Venue	Date	Time	Duration	Participants
1	CWA	CWA SW02	Enlarged General Assembly, CWA, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Diocese of Buea	St John of God Parish, Kumba Town	09/07/2016	11:13	2:20:10	Delegated National executive members, provincial, diocesan, divisional, and zonal executive members
		CWA SW01	Enlarged Provincial Meeting, CWA Our Lady of Divine Grace, Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province	St Anthony’s Parish Kumba-Mbeng, Kumba	01/04/2017	10:50	04:15:01	Delegated National executive member, provincial, diocesan, divisional, and zonal executive members
		CWA NW01	End of Year Congress and 50 th Anniversary Celebration, CWA Gate of Heaven Division, Arch Diocese of Bamenda	St. Theresa’s Parish Azire, Mankon	18/10/2014	08:00	06:11:50	Delegated diocesan executive members, divisional, zonal, and branch executive members
		CWA NW02	Zonal Executive Meeting, CWA Mirror of Justice Zone, Arch	St Martin de Porres Parish, Bambili	12/07/2017	16:03	02:36:21	Executive members of the zone and branches

			Diocese of Bamenda					
		CWA SW03	Branch Meeting, CWA Queen of Peace Muea, Diocese of Buea	St Andrew's Parish, Muea	27/03/2017	16:22	01:15:14	All members of the branch
		CWA NW03	Branch Meeting, CWA Ark of the Covenant branch, Ntambeng, Arch Diocese of Bamenda	St Bernadette's Parish, Ntambeng	23/05/2017	16:15	01:44:19	All members of the branch
2	CWF	CWF NW01	CWF/CMF Retreat and Leadership Course, Bui Division	PCHS Kumbo	03/08/2015	09:45	07:29:10	Executive members of CWF and CMF of zones, and branches, Bui Division
		CWF NW02	CWF Executive Meeting, Bui Presbytery	PCHS Kumbo Bui	04/08/2015	10:00	03:30:39	CWF executive members of zones, and branches of the presbytery,
		CWF NW03	CWF Group Meeting	Nitob I Parish, Mankon	22/05/2017	16:15	02:17:09	All members of the group
		CWF NW04	CWF/CMF Parish Retreat	Alachou Parish, Alachou	15/05/2017	16:12	01:00:50	All members of CWF and CMF in Alachou Parish.
		CWF SW01	Limbe Central Zonal Rally/Come-together	Bota Middle Farms, Fako-South Presbytery	14/05/2017	8:00	07:01:16	All members of the zone
		CWF SW02	Branch Meeting	New Town, Fako South Presbytery	28/03/2017	16:02	01:51:24	All members of the branch
3	CGF	CGF NW01	Sector Meeting, North West	Community Development, North West	03/08/2017	17:00	00:58:03	
		CGF NW02	Sector Meeting, North West	Community Development, North West	07/09/2017	16:30	01:06:45	Delegated executive members of member groups
		CGF NW03	Sector Meeting, North West	Community Development, North West	05/10/2017	15:56	01:15:20	Delegated executive members of member groups

		CGF SW01	Sector Meeting, Muyuka, South West	Government Practicing School, Muyuka	04/04/2016	10:00	01:52:02	Delegated executive members of member groups
		CGF SW02	Sector Meeting, Buea, South West	Muea	28/11/2016	16:15	02:18:41	Delegated executive members of member groups
		CGF SW03	Sector Meeting, Buea, South West	Muea	27/02/2017	16:03	01:59:01	Delegated executive members of member groups
4	BSRFTU	BSRFTU 01	Meeting Session	Commercial Avenue, Bamenda	08/07/2017	16:15	01:15:34	All members
		BSRFTU 02	Meeting Session	Commercial Avenue, Bamenda	05/08/2017	16:45	00:30:15	All members
		BSRFTU 03	Meeting Session	Commercial Avenue, Bamenda	15/07/2017	17:30	00:24:09	All members
5	OHCTB	OHCTB 01	Meeting Session	Owe, Muyuka	11/12/2016	14:45	01:27:12	All members
		OHCTB 02	Meeting Session	Owe, Muyuka	18/12/2016	15:15	01:40:23	All members
		OHCTB 03	Born-House Celebration	Owe, Muyuka	8/01/2017	14:01	02:41:15	All members

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Radcliffe-Brown (1952, as cited in Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 239) asserts that the “whole maintenance of a social order depends upon the appropriate kind and degree of respect being shown towards certain persons, things, ideas and symbols”. This principle also obtains in women gatherings where utterances, instruments and signs: symbols and gestures function to convey this respect. Because the nature of social relationship between persons is also intrinsically related to the kind and quality of the interaction that takes place between them (Brown and Levinson, 1987), understanding human beings' interactions entail the use of an integrative approach where instruments and signs: gestures, colours and symbol, which usually accompany utterances' use in most women gatherings are assigned meanings and functions. In the exploration of women communication practices in groups' dynamics of Anglophone Cameroon women's associations, Brown and Levinson's (1987) Face-saving politeness model have been

blended with Bale's (1957; 1999) Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) framework. While Bale's (1957; 1999) IPA framework has been employed to assign interaction functions to communicative acts expressed during meetings, rallies and seminars, Brown and Levinson's (1987) Face-saving politeness model has been used to label roles to linguistic and paralinguistic means that the members of these associations employ to show consideration to each other's feelings.

3.2.1 Politeness and Face-Work

As a domain in pragmatics, politeness has attracted much research. This is much so due to its influence in the smooth flow of interaction; making it one of the most studied pragmatics ingredients and therefore with varied definitions. In this study, therefore, the term politeness is used to refers to the linguistic and paralinguistic strategies which interlocutors adopt to show consideration for each other's feeling during an interaction. Before delving into the

discussion of Brown and Levinson's (1987; 2010) face-saving politeness theory, the framework that has been selected to describe the considerations shown by meeting members to each other's feelings during events, it is vital to give a highlight on one or two authors in politeness, given that it is one of the most widely explored pragmatic ingredients.

One of the earliest studies in the area of politeness has been Lakoff's (1973) study in which she discussed the Logic of Politeness. In this work, Lakoff prescribes behaviours she termed politeness maxims, which are "don't impose, give options and make your hearer feel good" (Lakoff, 1973 as cited in Paltridge, 2010, p.72). To Lakoff therefore, to be polite means saying the socially correct thing.

Rather than focusing on 'face needs' as did Brown and Levinson, Leech (1989) perceives politeness as a principle involving "trade-offs" with Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle which according to him "cannot explain why people are often so indirect in conveying what they mean," (p.80). He goes further affirming that human beings most often do flout Grice's Cooperative Principle's maxims of Quantity, Quality, Manner and Relation in order to uphold the politeness principle which he states thus:

Minimize (all things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs; Maximize (all things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs, (Leech, 1989, p. 81).

The Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim and Sympathy Maxim, which are manifested in the content of conversation, as well as in the way conversation is managed and structured by its participants, have been attached to this principle. Hence, conversational behaviour such as speaking at the wrong time (interrupting) or being silent at the wrong time has impolite implications, according to Leech.

Brown and Levinson's Face-Saving Politeness Framework

As already indicated, Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1989) approached politeness from the angle of principles and maxims. However, Brown and Levinson in their 1987 framework consider politeness as strategies used during interactions to safeguard interlocutors' face needs. Brown and Levinson in this theory postulate that during interactions, certain illocutionary acts face threaten or damage interlocutor's face. In order to reduce the intensity of these 'face damages' to either the speaker or the hearer,

interlocutors employ certain moves (politeness strategies), the choice of which are made on the basis of the speaker's assessment of D (Social Distance), P (Absolute Power) and R (Rating of the Imposition), (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.16). These three variables of power, social distance and rating of imposition determine the level of politeness "the weightiness (W_x) of an FTA" with which other things being equal, an FTA will be evaluated, (p.76). Its formula is as follows:

$$W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_x$$

Where:

W_x = the seriousness of an FTA (the degree of politeness of a communicative act)

D(H, S) = the value that measures the social distance between H and S

P(H, S) = the value that measures the power that H has over S

R_x = the value that measures the degree to which the communicative act x is rated an imposition in that culture, (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.76).

Brown and Levinson's notion of 'face' "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself," and "something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction" (p. 61), is derived from Goffman's (1967) work on face and from the English 'folk' notion of face, which ties up with the impression of "being embarrassed, humiliated, or losing face," (Goffman, 1967 as cited in Paltridge, 2010, p. 72). 'Face' according to Brown and Levinson therefore, "is the basic wants, which every member knows every other member desires, and which in general, is the interest of every member to partially satisfy," (p.61). It consists of two related aspects: negative face and positive face. While negative face is the want of every 'competent adult member' that his action be unimpeded by others: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distractions, which include freedom of actions and freedom from imposition, positive face on the other hand, is the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others. That is, the positive consistent self-image or 'personality'; crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of, claimed by interactants.

Some of these wants are acts which intrinsically threaten face (FTA) and are thus expressed through linguistic and paralinguistic strategies such as asking questions, giving opinion, stating facts, appreciating one another, praising, greeting, advising and expressing disapproval. Brown and Levinson assert that in the context of the mutual vulnerability of either of this face (negative or positive), any

rational agent will seek to avoid these face-threats and will thereby employ certain strategies to minimise threats. In doing this, he will take into account the relative weighting of (at least) three wants: (i) The want to communicate the content of the FTA x , (ii) the want to be efficient or urgent

and (iii) the want to maintain H's face to any degree. And, unless (ii) is greater than (iii), the speaker will minimize the threat of the FTA through the use of the following possible super strategies schematised in Figure 1 below

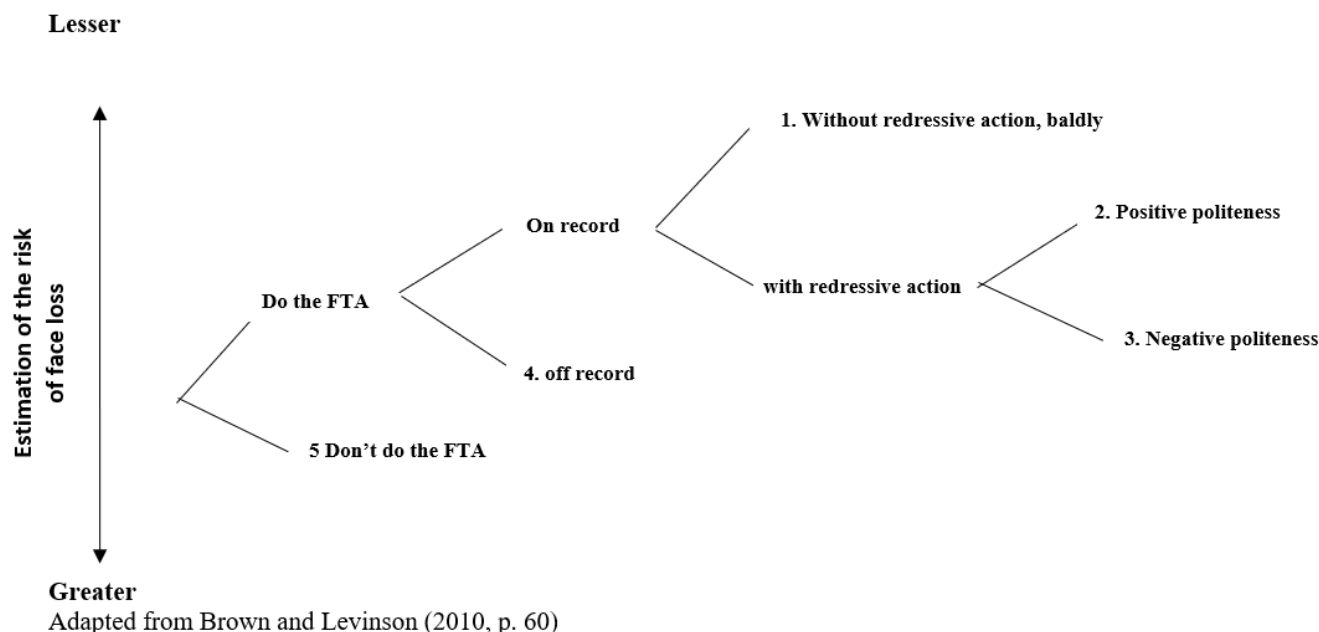


Fig.1: Circumstances determining choice of Strategy

As Figure 1 displays, if an actor cannot avoid doing the FTA, he/she has two choices: doing it on record or doing it off record. An actor therefore uses an on-record strategy if it is clear to him/her and the addressee what communicative intention led to the use of the FTA. He/she can use the on-record politeness strategy 1 (doing an act without redressive action, baldly) if the risk of face loss is lesser. This involves speaking in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible, in conformity with Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle's maxims of quality, quantity, manner and relation. According to Brown and Levinson, this happens in situations where there is low distance, high or low power and low rating of the imposition. For instance, during the Zonal meeting of CWA Mirror of Justice Zone, Bambili, Arch-Diocese of Bamenda, the Vice president uses a bald on record politeness strategy to announce report reading. The announcement- *Reading of reports* is done without redressive actions. Giving her position as the vice president (high power) and an elderly member of the association (high social distance), and giving the fact that it is a routing exercise for reports to be presented in zonal meetings, (low imposition), she uses this bald on record politeness strategy.

On the contrary, the use of redressive action (that is to say action that gives face to the addressee) "that attempts to

counteract the potential face damage of the FTA, by doing so in such a way, or with such modifications or additions, that indicates clearly that no such face threat is intended or desired, and that S in general recognises H's face wants and himself wants them to be achieved" (p. 70), gives room to two super strategies: 2-Positive Politeness and 3-Negative Politeness. According to Brown and Levinson, an FTA will be done in any of these two ways only if the speaker does not fear retribution from the addressee, especially in such circumstances where:

- (a) S and H both tacitly agree that the relevance of face demands may be suspended in the interest of urgency or efficiency;
- (b) where the danger to H's face is very small, as in offers, requests, suggestions that are clearly in H's interest and do not require great sacrifices of S; and
- (c) where S is vastly superior in power to H, or can enlist audience superior to destroy H's face without losing his own, (p. 69).

As portrayed in Figure 1, such redressive actions take one or two of the following forms depending on what aspect of face (negative or positive) is being redressed.

Positive Politeness (doing an FTA with redressive action No.2) as illustrated in figure 1, is oriented towards the

positive face of the hearer or addressee, anointing his/her face by "indicating that in some respect, S wants H's wants", (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.70). According to Brown and Levinson, the potential face threat of an act is minimised in the use of this strategy of politeness by the assurance that in general, the speaker wants at least some of hearer's wants. That is, he/she considers the addressee/hearer to be in important respects the same as him/her, with in-group rights and duties and expectations of reciprocity, or by the implication that speaker likes addressee so that the FTA doesn't mean a negative evaluation of addressee's face. 15 ways which are also motivated by three intentions, are the means through which this approach-based intent could be expressed.

The first intention is the desire of the speaker to claim common ground with the hearer. This gives rise to 8 sub-strategies: 1- Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods), 2- Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy) with H, 3- Intensify interest to H, 4- Use in-group identity markers, 5- Seek agreement, 6- Avoid disagreement, 7- Presuppose/raise/assert common ground, and 8-Joke.

The second intention is the attempt by the speaker to convey that speaker and hearer are co-operators. This gives rise to 6 sub strategies. They are sub-strategy 9- Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants, sub-strategy 10- Offer, promise, sub-strategy 11- Be optimistic, sub-strategy 12- Include both S and H in the activity, sub-strategy 13- Give (or ask for) reasons, and sub-strategy 14- Assume or assert reciprocity.

The last intention is the desire of the speaker to fulfil hearer's want (for some X). This gives rise to the last strategy, sub-strategy 15- Give gift to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation). This sub-strategy was one of the most commonly used by meeting members. During events, members were appreciated with praises, gifts, claps and even ululations.

As indicated earlier, the other redressive action strategy of face redress is negative politeness (on record action with redress 2). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), this strategy is the 'heart of respect behaviour,' which is oriented mainly towards partially satisfying (redressing) addressee's negative face, "his basic want to maintain claim of territory and self-determination ... and to have his freedom of action unhindered and attention unimpeded," (p.70). This super strategy of politeness is essentially avoidance-based, and realisations of it consist in assurances that the speaker recognises and respects the addressee's negative-face wants and will not (or will only minimally) interfere with addressee's freedom of action. It is characterised by self-effacement, formality and restraint, with attention to very restricted aspects of addressee's self-image, centring on

his/her want to be unimpeded. FTAs are redressed with apologies for interfering or transgressing, with linguistic and non-linguistic deference, with hedges on the illocutionary force of the act, with impersonalising mechanisms (such as passives) that distances speaker and hearer from the act, and with other softening mechanisms that gives the addressee an 'out', a face-saving line of escape, permitting him/her to feel that his/her response is not coerced.

Brown and Levinson state that five major intents motivate the use of any of the negative politeness' sub strategies. The first one, which is titled 'Be direct' is an intuition driving urge that "sometimes directs us to minimize the imposition by coming rapidly to the point, avoiding the further imposition of prolixity and obscurity", (p.130). It gives rise to sub-strategy 1- Be conventionally indirect.

The second intention is 'Don't presume/assume'. According to Brown and Levinson, with this intention in mind, the speaker carefully avoids presuming or assuming that anything involved in the FTA is desired or believed by the addressee. This leads to the use of certain strategies of communication which show avoidance of presumptions about addressee and his wants; what is relevant or interesting or worthy of his attention, thereby keeping ritual distance from him/her. It gives rise to sub-strategy 2- Question, hedge.

The third major way of redressing hearer's negative face is 'Don't coerce H'. This approach is used when the proposed FTA involves predicating an act of hearer, for example, when requesting his/her aid or offering him/her something which requires his/her acceptance. Brown and Levinson further assert that for such FTAs, negative redress may therefore be made by avoiding coercing hearer's response. This may be done by explicitly giving addressee the option not to do a certain act. Five strategies are used to accomplish this intention. They include sub-strategy 1- Be conventionally indirect, sub-strategy 2- Question, hedge, sub-strategy 3- Be pessimistic, sub-strategy 4- Minimize the imposition, Rx, and sub-strategy 5- Give deference.

The fourth motivation that leads to the redress of a listener's negative face is "communicate S's want to not impinge on H," (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 187). This tactic represents an intention of the speaker to partially satisfy H's negative-face demands, thus indicating that S is aware of them and is taking them into account in his/her decision to communicate the FTA. Four strategies are used in realising this intent. They are sub-strategy 6- Apologise, sub-strategy 7- Impersonalise S and H: Avoid the pronoun 'I' and 'you', sub-strategy 8- State the FTA as a general rule and sub-strategy 9- Nominalise.

The last and fifth intention is 'Redress other wants of H's derivatives from negative face', (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 209). This consists in the offering of partial compensation for the face threat of the FTA, giving rise to two outputs, output 5- Give deference and output 10- Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not incurring H. For instance, to avoid being asked to wait for the meetings' closing time of 6pm, a member of Biwon Self-Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union (BSRFTU) uses an NP2 strategy, hedging her request to leave before the meeting's closing time with *Abeg wuna fit eskius mi? Ai neva rimuv tins dem fo teibl* (Please, can you permit leave? I have not packed my things). She is hedging her request with the word *abeg* (please), and the phrase *wuna fit eskius mi* (can you permit me). Although she is not an executive member (low power and low social distance), She intends leaving when deliberations are still going on in the meeting (high imposition).

As figure 1 illustrates above, the fourth way of doing an FTA is to do it off record. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), an interactant does an FTA off record if the risk of face loss is greater, indicating that there is more than one unambiguously attributable intention, so that the speaker cannot be held to have committed himself to a particular intention. In other words, he/she makes use of all kinds of hints as to what he/she wants or means to communicate, without doing so directly, so that the meaning of the utterance is to some extent negotiable. These off-record strategies are therefore utterances which are essentially indirect uses of language, where speaker says something that is either more general or contains less information, flouting Grice's (1975) maxims of quantity, manner, relation and quality. Linguistic realisations of this super strategy of politeness include metaphors and ironies, rhetorical questions, understatements, tautologies, and all kinds of hints as to what the speaker wants or means to communicate, without doing so directly.

Two major intents: the desire to invite conversational implicatures and the desire to be vague or ambiguous, motivate a speaker to select any of the 15 off-record politeness tactics. If the speaker chooses the first intention, (the desire to invite a conversational implicature) he/she chooses to do the FTA indirectly, giving the hearer some hints which he/she uses to interpret what the speaker really means or intends to say. In doing this, the speaker violates three of Grice's Maxims- that of relation, that of quantity and that of quality. In violating any of these maxims, the hearer is left to ask himself/herself "why did S say that that way?", (Brown and Levinson 1987, p. 213). To invite these conversational implicatures from the hearer therefore, the speaker can give hints (sub-strategy 1), can give association clues (sub-strategy 2), presupposes (sub-strategy 3),

understates (sub-strategy 4), overstates (sub-strategy 5), uses tautologies (sub-strategy 6), uses contradictions (sub-strategy 7), becomes ironic (sub-strategy 8), uses metaphors (sub-strategy 9), and uses rhetorical questions (sub-strategy 10).

The second major intension that motivates a speaker to use any of the off-record tactics is the desire to be vague or unambiguous. Brown and Levinson assert that in doing this, the speaker violates Grice's maxim of manner "Be perspicuous; avoid ambiguity and obscurity" (p. 95). In violating this maxim, the speaker, rather than inviting a particular implicature, will be vague or unambiguous in such a way that his communicated goal remains ill-defined. This, therefore, leads to sub-strategy 11- Be unambiguous, sub-strategy 12- Be vague, sub-strategy 13- Over-generalise, sub-strategy 14- Displace H, and sub-strategy 15- Be incomplete, use ellipsis. For instance, after appreciating members for their financial commitment and sacrifices with references to the affairs of the association, the financial secretary of CWF Mezam Presbytery uses an ORP4 strategy- Understate and an ORP12 strategy- Be vague: *Except fo som fyu membas whe dem don disaid sei God hi wok no get tu go ahead*, (Except for some few members who have decided to disturb God's work), to chastise members who are not financially committed to the affair of the association, flouting the maxims of quantity and manner.

The fifth major way of safeguarding interlocutors' face as illustrated on Figure 1 is 'Don't do the FTA' (DDFTA). Brown and Levinson in their analysis do not give a broad description of this last politeness super strategy. However, they hypothesise that 'Don't do the FTA' is another avoidance-based communicative strategy in which the speaker decides to maintain silent when he/she is expected to comment on an issue. They further posit that this usually takes place when the speaker wants to desist from hurting the addressee, because he/she envisages that his utterance will further spark a confrontation, thereby hurting either the positive or the negative face of the addressee.

It is obvious that women as do other human beings are endowed with Brown and Levinson's proposed 'face wants': the want to be unimpeded on (negative face) and the want to be approved of in certain aspects (positive face). Some of these wants are acts which intrinsically threaten each other's face, expressed through linguistic and paralinguistic strategies such as asking questions, giving opinion, stating facts, appreciating one another, praising, greeting, complaining about things, scolding one another, criticising and advising others. In carrying out these acts, members of these predominantly female associations run the risks of infringing on one other's face. In order to avoid

these risks of face loss and to render their communicative intention acceptable, they jointly cooperate to maintain face; making sure at all cost, to not infringe on each other's face needs employing any of the above proposed strategies of politeness outlined above.

The choice of Brown and Levinson's (1987) 'face-saving' politeness framework as the model used in assigning functions and meaning to women associations' group members strategies of face needs' consideration was motivated by the following reasons:

First, the theory posits that because interaction always attracts aggression (face threatening acts); human beings strive to look for ways to disarm these aggressions through amicable use of language (politeness). This view about politeness has practical implication for this study given that women who have had a long history of marginalisation and maltreatment, and who will likely be sensitive to such behaviours, especially from peers, will most likely expect a disarm of such aggressive tendencies with the use of politeness strategies, when being addressed and when addressing fellow members.

Second, because the main objective of this study has been to identify those specific communication practices in groups' interactions of women associations, the sub strategies or tactics of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) will provide a useful framework to quantify women's tactics of face redress as they commune. This is because politeness as a pragmatic act provides us with a clear notion of how communication can be made accessible, given that it is mainly made up of attempts intended to maintain the smooth flow of communication and the 'save-facing' of interlocutors. This is in line with Leech's (1989) assertion that politeness maintains the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable interlocutors to assume that they are cooperative, (p.82). The data gathered from observed associations' events have illustrated this.

3.2.2. Bales' Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) Framework

As stated earlier, this study has blended Bales' (1957; 1999) IPA framework with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model to assign communication functions to utterances, signs and gestures used during associations' events of Anglophone Cameroon women groups. According to Bales, in order to make meaning out of behaviours and the conditions in which they take place, these behaviours have to be broken down to component parts known as single acts of communication or expressions. While these acts function separately as single communicative intentions, they can equally be grouped under headings with reference to their communicative

function in group dynamics, into what is termed the problem-solving process or procedure of Question, Attempted Answer, Negative Reaction and Positive Reactions. Bales further hypothesise that this problem-solving process usually commences with Questions, which are followed by Attempted Answers, then Negative Reactions, and lastly, Positive Reactions, "visualised as a system of interaction in time and between members" (1957, as cited in Ewane *et al.*, 2022 p. 73). Questions, according to Bales are a group of behaviours employed by speakers in demanding for orientation, opinion, suggestions and inquiries during discussions in meetings. They function to elicit response from the addressee, thereby giving a push to the smooth flow of interaction during groups' discussions. Attempted answers are suggestions, opinions and orientations- behaviours that function to provide answers so as to clear doubt and questions raised during interactions. Furthermore, negative reactions are behaviours that express disagreement, anxiety, fear and antagonism. They are utterances and communicative acts which represent actors' dislikes and constraints during group discussions. Lastly, positive reactions are communicative acts of expression of solidarity, satisfaction, agreement and camaraderie by members during group discussions, (Bales 1957, as cited in Ewane *et al.*, 2022).

In an attempt to mitigate the intensity of the 'face damages' of communicative acts in the realisation of the above problem-solving procedure of Questions, Attempted Answers, Negative Reactions and Positive Reactions during meeting deliberations, members of BSRFTU, CGF, CWA, CWF and OCTB hedge them with politeness strategies. The sections that follow present these communicative acts and the strategies of politeness employed to mitigate their face-threats during seminars, meetings, rallies and conferences organised in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

Durkheim (1915) theorised that the human personality is a sacred thing, that one dare not violate it nor infringe its bounds, and that at the same time, the greatest good is in communion with others, (Durkheim, 1915, as cited in Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.1). As the result of the use of politeness in the groups observed and recorded indicates, women seem to have internalised this principle in their language use given that they strive to appease one another by mitigating and hedging their communicative acts. In order to reduce the face-threats of their communicative acts and to appease one another therefore, they make use of various strategies of politeness. This is probably because

they have had an extended history of marginalisation and struggle for recognition, (Bih, 2014; Halsey and Johnson, 1988; Kassea, 2006; Kah, 2012; Nzung, 2011). The sections below illustrate this.

4.1 Politeness and Communication Practices in groups' interaction of Anglophone Cameroon women associations

In an attempt to render their intentions and communicative acts non-face threatening, members of women associations from the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon mitigated them with different politeness strategies. The data reveals that all of Brown and Levinson's (1987) proposed super-strategies of politeness were used during events organised by these women associations, though in different magnitude. This result of the use of politeness during events organised by members of CWA, CWF, CGF, BSRFTU and OHCTB reveals significant traits of women's interaction ethics, which are: the use of collaborative and cooperative talk to create and maintain relationships, the avoidance of criticisms or making it gentle if it could not be avoided, the avoidance of outdoing others, or putting others down, and

the tendency of paying attention to others and to relationships.

A total of 6,599 strategies of politeness accompanied thought units during interactions in selected women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon. 4,796 of these strategies, that is 72.7% were used in faith-based events and 1,803 of them, a percentage of 27.3, were used in development-based events. The results reveal a trend of use of these politeness strategies as far as Bales problem-solving sequence is concerned. The majority of these politeness strategies accompanied attempted answers thought units- 2,293 strategies, that is 34.7%. 1,942 strategies, that is 29.4% accompanied positive reactions thought units, and 1,410 strategies (21.4%) were used during negative reactions thought units. Lastly, Questions thought units were expressed with 954 politeness strategies. That is 14.5%. Figure 2, figure 3, tables 4 and 5 illustrate these frequencies of use of the five super strategies of politeness in the 24 meetings in the two women associations categories from the South West and North West Regions of Cameroon.

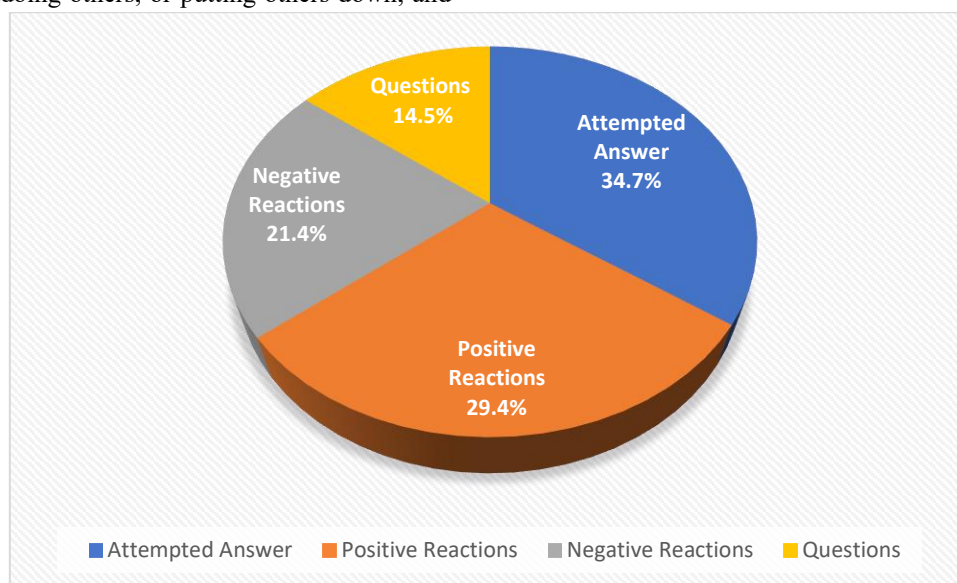


Fig.2: Rate of use of Politeness in Bales' Problem-solving Process

Table 4: Distribution of Politeness Super Strategies in Interactions of Women Associations from the Anglophone Cameroon

Associations	Politeness Super Strategies										Total	
	BOR		DDFTA		PP		NP		ORP			
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Faith-Based	430	8.9	21	0.4	3541	73.8	431	9	373	7.8	4,796	72.7
Development-Based	110	6.1	7	0.4	1100	61	234	13	352	19.5	1,803	27.3
Total	540	8.2	28	0.4	4,641	70.3	665	10.1	725	11	6,599	100

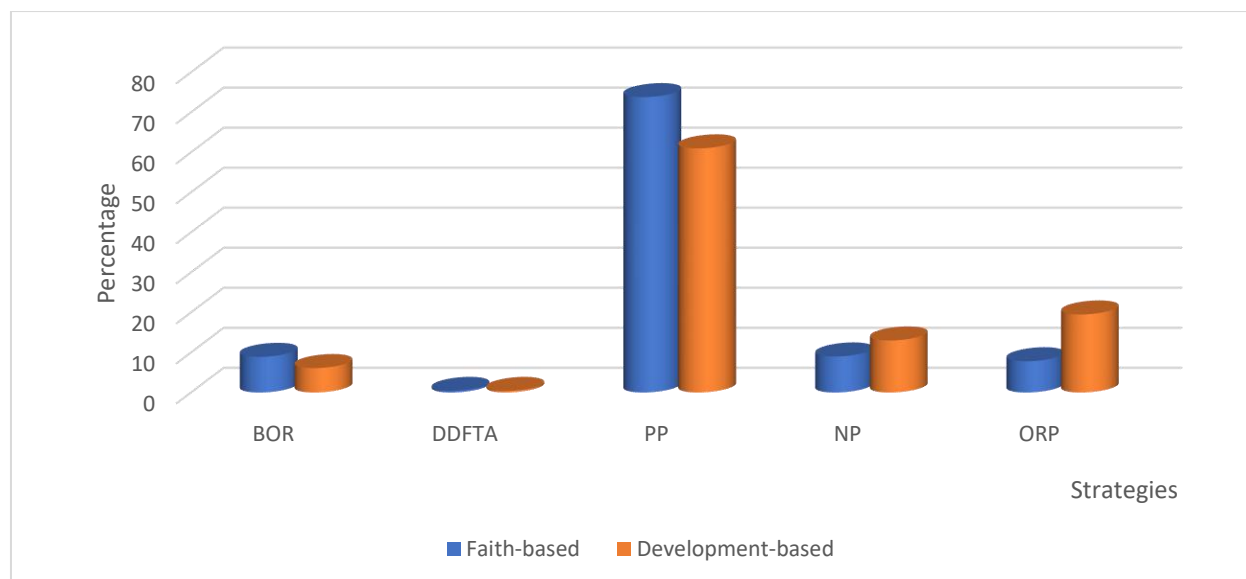


Fig.3: Rate of Use of Politeness Strategies during Interaction in Women Associations from the Anglophone Cameroon

As table 4 and figure 2 show, a total of 6,599 politeness strategies were used during these women gatherings. A majority of these strategies (4,796, that is 72.7%) were used in faith-based associations and 1,803 strategies, a percentage of 27.3, were used during interactions in development-based associations. Of the five super strategies of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), Positive Politeness (PP) was the most frequently employed super strategy in the activities of these women associations. It recorded an overall percentage of 70.3; that is 4,641 strategies used, with 3541 strategies (73.8%) used in faith-based associations and 1100 strategies (60%) used in development-based associations.

Because this politeness super strategy consists of redress directed to the addressee's positive face, his/her perennial desire that his/her wants (or the actions/acquisition/values resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable, (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.101), members of these women associations employed it to demonstrate interest and approval of each other's personality, shared knowledge and implicit claims to reciprocity.

In the use of positive politeness, four sub strategies were regularly used during these women associations' events. These were PP4- Use in-group identity markers, (32.4% in faith-based events and 28.5% in development-based events), PP7- Presuppose/raise/assert common ground, (17.8% in faith-based events and 12.8% in development-based events), and PP5- Seek agreement, (10.5% in faith-based events and 9.5% in development-based events). It is important to note that PP12- Include both S and H in the activity, was more significant in faith-based events.

As indicated above, PP4 was more significant in the two categories of associations. This sub-strategy of positive politeness entails the use of "in-group usages of address forms, of language or dialect, of jargon or slang, and ellipsis" to convey in-group membership and to demonstrate solidarity, (Brown and Levinson 1987, p.107). One of the most common ways that in-group membership was expressed in these women interactions was through address forms. Address forms such as *mothers, mami dem, mami, Mami Ndong, Mami fada, manyi, Ma Vero, sister, sisters, papa Monsi, Mami Perla*, (from faith-based events) *comrades, massa, mami dem, sisters, orphans, bushfaller, brothers, sisters, boh, friends, fish, baby Ma Fri, and ma Vero* (from development-based events), demonstrated in-group solidarity. Also, indigenous languages, songs, ululations, in-group jargon and slangs were equally used to pass on important messages during events. These in-group markers reflected the tempo or atmosphere of events, revealing a spirit of solidarity among members. This was true of songs such as "jolie jolie oh", (a positive communicative act of rejoicing), from CWA NW01, "We are one, eh eh, we are together" from OHCTB03, (positive communicative act of rejoicing), and "CWA wuna kontinyue (an attempted answer communicative act). This politeness sub-strategy was equally used by members to convey in-group membership. This was evident in OHCTB where in-group songs such as 'Wen mai hat de swit oh', 'Midwaiv kam oh', 'O Unity', and 'Chicheh nape ndap' were used to express taboo subjects such as sex during a 'born-house' (birth celebration). Chiatoh and Lando (2021) assert that by using coded language, women create a community of practice that excludes males and children, thereby creating common ground and protecting the sanctity

of the female experience while adhering to public decency laws. The uses of these in-group identity markers abound in the expressions of positive reactions and attempted answers during meeting deliberations as illustrated in Communicative acts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 from CGF SW0 and OHCTB0, respectively.

Communicative Act 1: *Masoma* (Thank you)

Context: CGF SW02

In communicative act 1 above, the coordinator of Gatsby Buea uses an in-group language, Duala, to express her gratitude for having been offered food. Duala is one of the indigenous languages spoken in the Littoral Region of Cameroon. It is also one of the three indigenous languages commonly used during activities in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. Although she is the coordinator of the programme (high power), she is expressing her gratitude for having been offered food (low imposition) in a 'born-house ceremony where everyone is expected to feel at ease (low social distance).

Another signal of in-group membership and of solidarity in these women events was the recitation of associations' mottos, slangs and slogans. The phrase *Through Mary... To Jesus* taken from Jn 2:12, was used in all the CWA events to signal common ground and in-group membership. Likewise, the phrase *If anyone is in Christ... He is a new creation*, taken from 2Cor 5:17 was used in all CWF events to assert common ground and in-group membership. In CGF, the phrase *Gatsby In... Poverty out!* was used and *One Hand!.. I no di tie bundle* was used in OHCTB events. Additionally, the slogan:

CWA women: Golden Women

Sowers of Hope: Reapers of Joy

Blessed are the peace makers: They shall be called children of God

Working together: For a Better Future

Unity of purpose: Unity of Action,

(Communicative act 2, Context: CWA),

was used in important CWA gatherings such as divisional meetings, provincial meetings and diocesan events to signal in-group membership and of solidarity. Likewise, the Bible verses *Christ is coming!... Coming with your pay*, taken from Rev. 22:12, and *With us in mind! ...God has a better plan*, taken from Heb 11:40, were used during CWF events to signal solidarity. These phrases were equally used for greetings, as attention getters, as concluding statements, for invitations, and even as signals of disapprovals.

Another means of signalling in-group membership and of solidarity that was peculiar to CWA was the use of Marian names for groups' identification. These are the virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary adopted by groups for identification. As communicative act 3, 4 and 5 illustrate, these Marian names were used to address branches, zones, divisions and dioceses. The uses of these Marian names in addressing groups and groups' members reinforced the sense of belonging and of solidarity, a sign of togetherness, also reflecting low power and low social distance between members.

Communicative Act 3: *So, Haus of Gold wi de weit wuna fo preiyas*. (House of Gold we are still waiting for you to lead us in prayers).

Context: CWA NW01

Communicative Act 4: *As wi de weit, Seat of Wisdom go giv wi song*. (While we are waiting, Seat of Wisdom will tune us a song)

Context: CWA NW01

Communicative Act 5: *Mami dem wuna shidon akodin tu divishon... Mirror of Justice... Mother of Christ, Mate Deio, Good Council, Queen of Peace, Spiritual Vessel...* (Mothers sit according to divisions. Mirror of Justice, Mother of Christ, Mother of God, Good Council, Queen of Peace, Spiritual Vessel...)

Context: CWA SW02

These findings of the high use of in-group markers and address forms during events of women associations from the South West and North West regions of Cameroon; communication strategies expressing solidarity, cooperation and common background, go a long way to confirm wood's assertion that for women, the content of talk is dealt with, but usually not without serious attention to the feelings involved, (Wood, 1994, as cited in Verderber 1995). This also confirms Anchimbe's (2008) and Echu's (2008) claim that in-group identity markers, address forms and kinship terms do not only bring interactions closer to addressee and speaker in terms of distance, but are also used by interlocutors to express politeness.

Although of minimal occurrence, off record politeness is the second in the rank of politeness use in the 24 analysed meetings. 725 strategies of off record politeness were used in the 24 sampled meetings events, giving us 11% coverage. Although Brown and Levinson assert that off record strategies are usually employed when speakers want to

avoid the responsibility for doing them, leaving them open to the addressee to decide how to interpret them, the findings of this study reveal that off record politeness use during events in women association from the Anglophone Cameroon, showed evidence of members desire to connect with one another. For instance, in **Communicative act 6:** *Lo don kach loya! Lo don kach loya!* (The law has been violated by the lawyer! The law has been violated by the lawyer), an ORP9 strategy (Use metaphors), the president of OHCTB is indirectly apologising for being late and at the same time indirectly accepting the punishment for her offense. Although she is the president of the association (high power), she is also a member too (low social distance). However, she is one of those who came late, a sign of non-commitment (high imposition) and therefore has to pay the fine for lateness.

The findings reveal that the most frequently used off record sub-strategies were ORP4- Understates, (24.3% in faith-based and 16.8% in development-based events), and ORP12- Be vague, (21.4% in faith-based and 27.3% in development-based events). Communicative act 7 below illustrates the use of two ORP sub-strategies- Use metaphor (ORP9) and be ambiguous (ORP11) in CWF North West and CGF North West, respectively. For instance, in communicative act 7 below, which is a negative reaction communicative act, an elderly member of CWF is using a metaphor (ORP 9) and Be ambiguous (ORP11), to disagree with another member's suggestion.

Communicative Act 7 : *Ai sei eh! Na hau dat prodigal son tori deh egein so eh? Weh dem bin sei meik yi chop fo masta yi teibl bet yi disaid fo chop na swain yi chop fo wait man kontri?* (Can someone remind us of that prodigal son story, the person who refused affluence offered by his father just to go and eat scraps in the white man's land).

Context: CWF NW02

In a previous utterance, a participant had suggested that the divisional rally be reduced from two days to a day, and some members had applauded her for that suggestion. To blame her and to demonstrate the waywardness of such wrong suggestions, this elderly member uses a metaphor (ORP 9), and an ambiguous statement (ORP 11). Although she has high power over most members, due to her age and the fact that she had once been a divisional president of the association, she is addressing the whole group (low social distance). However, her utterance is face-threatening because it is a criticism and a blame (high imposition), hence the use of a metaphor, an ambiguous communicative act, flouting Grice's maxims of quality and manner.

It is interesting to note that there was a higher rate of use of ORP strategies in development-based associations- 19.5%

as opposed to 7.8% for faith-based events. This is probably due to the fact that the recovery of loan from recalcitrant members was a major topic of discussion in development-based association meetings. In order to avoid face threatening members who have not complied with the loan refund policies, members used indirect communicative strategies to confront them. Communicative act 8 and 9 from CGF North West illustrates this.

Communicative Act 8: We de shidon so, una no de know say Casanova them there inside we? (We are unaware that Casanovas are among us here)

Context: CGF NW01

Communicative Act 9: Casanova them plenty inside here. (There are so many Casanovas among us)

Context: CGF NW01

In order to avoid direct confrontation with members who do not want to comply with the loan refund policy of Gatsby Foundation, a male member (low power and low social distance) expresses a negative reaction communicative act of complain (high imposition) using the ORP strategies 13- Over generalise and 9- Use metaphors in communicative act 8 (high imposition), flouting Grice's maxims of manner and quality. Communicative act 9 is response from a female member, confirming what is said, also flouting the maxims of manner and quality.

The third in the ranking of politeness use is Negative Politeness. A total of 665 strategies, 10.1% of this politeness strategy was used during these women association interactions. Brown and Levinson hypothesise that negative politeness is an avoidance-based communication strategy which is the "heart of respect behaviour," consisting of communicative acts of redress directed to the addressee's negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded, (p.129). Its linguistic realizations consist of conventional indirectness, hedges on illocutionary force, polite pessimism (about the success of request etc.), and the emphasis on H's relative power oriented mainly towards partially satisfying (redressing) this negative face, (p.70). The most frequently used sub-strategies of negative politeness in meeting events observed and recorded were NP2- Question, hedge (42.3% in development-based events and 34.3% in faith-based events), NP4-Minimize the imposition, Rx (22.2% in development-based and 22% in faith-based), and NP5- Give deference (9.5% in faith-based and 9.4% in development-based).

Although Brown and Levinson theorise that negative politeness strategies are "forms useful in general for social

distancing" (p.130), the findings of this study reveal that the use of negative politeness during associations' events had an opposite effect. Their uses were intended to create equality and to include others. Communicative acts 10 and 11 illustrate this. This discredits Lakoff (1975), who claim that women's use of hedges, qualifiers, and tag questions, represent lack of confidence and uncertainty and a sign of powerlessness.

Communicative Act 10: *Through Mary, meik wi teik taim de wei wi de tok, nois ova plenti.* (Through Mary! We should be careful in the way we talk. There is so much noise).

Context: CWA NW03

In communicative act 10, a negative reaction communicative act of criticising, the branch president of CWA, Ark of the Covenant Branch, Ntambeng hedges her criticism (high imposition) of members (low power and Low distance) who were conversing while deliberations were going on in the meeting with the particle *Through Mary*. The phrase *Through Mary*, weakened the force of the criticism that came with the utterance.

Likewise in the attempted answer communicative act of suggesting below, the coordinator of Gatsby Muyuka is distanced herself from the imposition of fines on recalcitrant members with the phrase *Wen lo deh, dem go help wi* (If there are rules and regulations, we shall all benefit from them). Also, by saying *Yu no sei yuman bin deh so bai neicho, if yu no put ruls, yi no go du tin dem wel* (It is said that providing rules help control human beings), she is signalling her intention to not impose but compelled to do so due to circumstances.

Communicative Act 11: *Ai de jos soges somtin. Yu no sei yuman bin deh so bai neicho, if yu no put ruls, yi no go du tin dem wel. Wen lo deh, dem go help wi.* (I wish to suggest something. It is said that providing rules help control human beings. If there are rules and regulations, we shall all benefit from them).

Context: CGF SW01

Members of women associations also performed acts baldly, without redressive actions, in conformity with Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle's maxims of quality, quantity, manner and relation. Though minimally used, the

result of the use of bald on record politeness (BOR) also reveals closeness among members of these women groups. A total of 540 strategies of BOR, that is 8.2% overall were used to effect thought units during associations' events. The results show that in situations where risk of face loss was minimal, members of CWA, CWF, CGF, BSRFTU and OHCTB spoke in direct, clear unambiguous and concise ways, in conformity of Grice's (1975) CP maxims. In communicative act 12 below, in respond to the coordinator's question of *Malingo wimen, wuna bin get problem. Hau wuna don sovam?* (Malingo women, what have you done with the problem you had?), the president of the group responded in clear, concise and unambiguous manner, conforming to all of Grice's CP maxims as follows:

Communicative Act 12: *Wi bin pik aut ol dous membas dem weh dem bi de dilei wi las yie fo bring dia moni. Den wi tel dem sei durin de nesk seshon, dem no go join wi fo teik loun. Wi de stil obzev dat nau so.* (We have identified all those members who delayed in the payments of loan last year. They have been informed of the likelihood of no longer receiving loans. They are still undergoing observations)

Context: CGF SW01

Lastly, because women use collaborative and cooperative talk to create and maintain relationships, there is usually minimal use of Don't Do the FTA (DDFTA). Only 28 strategies of DDFTA were found in the transcripts, a percentage of 0.4 overall. Rather than keep their grievances, members expressed them so that they could have answers to their doubts. In CWA SW02 for instance, a member whom others told to keep her complain to herself responded: *Ai beg wuna lef mi meik ai tok* (Please, permit me to say something). And after expressing herself when she was given the opportunity, she declared: *Through Mary! Ai don finish tok* (Through Mary! I am done talking). The behaviour of this member demonstrates that the expression of feelings is an important aspect of interaction among women. This is because communication to women is a tool for building relationship and expressing solidarity and connection.

4.2 Variations and Similarities in Politeness Use in Women Association Interactions

The findings from the observed meetings show that there were commonalities as well as differences in the frequency as well as the composition of politeness strategies employed during interactions in the two categories of associations. The data reveals that more of positive politeness strategies were used during interactions in the both association types. However, while off record politeness was also preferred in development-based associations' events, negative

politeness and bald on record were higher in faith-based associations. This was probably because most development-based associations' meeting deliberations were centred on how loans could be recovered from defaulters. During discussions, members expressed their feelings and opinions using off-record strategies.

Don't Do the FTA was very minimal in the two categories of associations. All of the DDFTAs used were in carrying out negative reaction communicative acts. For instance, in CGF NW03, members refused speaking when the coordinator (high power) asked them to give suggestions on the type of punishment (high imposition) the group should give a recalcitrant member (low social distance) who was present in the meeting.

Also, in OHCTB, members (Low power) were afraid to scold (high imposition) the president who came late to the meeting. Other late comers were asked to pay the fine of 50frs, except the president. Although she herself felt guilty and exclaimed: *Lo don kach loya! Lo don kach loya!*, an apology, nobody had the courage to remind her later to pay the fine.

While songs and gestures were generally used to express politeness in the two categories of associations, instruments such as whistles and gong were used more in faith-based associations. Equally, the attributes and virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary were commonly used during events of CWA as address forms and in-group identity marker (PP4). This was not observed in any other association's interactions.

V. CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore politeness use during interactions in women associations from the South West and North West regions of Cameroon in order to reveal their functions in groups' dynamics of Anglophone Cameroon women. Specifically, it sought to identify these politeness strategies and to explore the extent to which their use function to reveal communication practices and interaction patterns of Anglophone Cameroon women (North West and South West). Lastly, it explored the commonalities and differences in the use of this conversational rule in the various women associations' events.

The constant use of certain strategies of politeness during group's events in Anglophone Cameroon women associations' interactions reveals significant traits of women's interaction ethics: the use of collaborative and cooperative talk to create and maintain relationships, the avoidance of criticisms or making it gentle if it could not be avoided, the avoidance of outdoing others, or putting others down, and the tendency of paying attention to others and to

relationships. The findings which reveal that positive politeness strategies abound in the interactions of both categories of associations confirms this. PP4- Use in-group identity markers, PP7- Presuppose/raise/assert common ground and PP5- Seek agreement were the most frequently used strategies. However, PP12- include both S and H in the activity was significant in faith-based events. This high use of PP4, PP5, PP7 and PP12 in these women association events; communication strategies expressing in-group solidarity, cooperation and common background, go a long way to confirm Wood's assertion that for women, the content of talk is dealt with, but usually not without serious attention to the feelings involved, (1994, as cited in Verderber, 1995).

Though to a lesser extent, members of these associations also used negative politeness, off record politeness and Bald on record politeness strategies during interactions. Of these three politeness super strategies, off record politeness topped the list, with ORP4- understates, and ORP12- Be vague, being the most frequently employed strategies. For negative politeness, NP2- Question, hedge, NP4- Minimize the imposition, Rx, and NP5- Give deference were the most frequently used. As the findings reveal, the constant use of NP2- Question, hedge and NP4- Minimize the imposition, Rx during meeting deliberations demonstrate members' desire to keep conversation open and to include others.

Equally, members of CWA, CWF, CGF, BSRFTU and OHCTB spoke in direct, clear unambiguous and concise way in conformity to Grice's (1975) CP maxim of quality, quantity, manner and relation. This was done in situations where risk of face loss was minimal. These strategies were also minimally explored during events in the two association categories.

Lastly, there was very minimal use of DDFTA- a silent strategy of communication. Rather than keep their grievances, members expressed them so that they could have answers to their doubts. This goes a long way to confirm Wood's (1994 as cited in Verderber, 1995) view that because women use collaborative and cooperative talk to create and maintain relationships, there is usually minimal use of silent strategies of communication. The above use of politeness demonstrates that communication for members of these women groups does not only revolve around discussing issues. It also entails connecting with one another.

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Appendix A

Songs

Song No 1. Midwaiv Kam oh

Midwaiv kam oh, Midwaiv kam oh
Cham, cham.
Mai weis oh, mai wei oh,
Cham, cham.
Tu man wok oh, wan man kari am oh
Cham, cham.

English rendering

Midwife come oh, Midwife come oh
Cham, cham
Oh, my waist hurts. Oh, my waist hurts,
Cham, cham.
Two people have worked and one person bears the pains
Cham, cham.

Song No. 2 Wen mai hat de veks oh

Wen mai hat de veks oh, wen mai hat de veks oh
Wen mai hat de veks oh, ai ben mai fut
Chorus: Yeh yeh wen mai hat de veks oh, ai ben mai fut

Wen mai hat de veks oh, wen mai hat de veks oh
Wen mai hat de veks oh, ai we kolan
Chorus: Yeh yeh wen mai hat de veks oh ai we kolan

Wen mai hat de veks oh, wen mai hat de veks oh
Wen mai hat de veks oh, oh ai ton mai bak
Chorus: Yeh yeh wen mai hat de veks oh ai ton mai bak

Wen mai hat de swit oh, wen mai hat de swit oh
Wen mai hat de swit oh ai show mai feis
Chorus: Yeh yeh wen mai hat de swit oh ai show mai feis

English rendering

When I am sad, when I am sad
When I am sad, I bend my legs.
Chorus: Yeh yeh, when I am sad, I bend my legs.

When I am sad, when I am sad
When I am sad, I wear panties.
Chorus: Yeh yeh, when I am sad, I wear panties.

When I am happy, when I am happy
When I am happy, I give in.
Chorus: Yeh yeh, when I am happy, I give in.

Song No 3. Chiche nape ndap

Chiche nape ndab
Chorus: ehion
Ben ndabe e boh ateh
Chorus: ehion
Chiche nape ndab
Chorus: ehion
Ben ndabe e boh ateh

Chorus: ehion, ehion, ehion, ehion.
(akosse)

English Rendering

What renders the house clean?
It's the broom.
So that it can comfort its host?
It's the broom.
What renders the house clean?
It's the broom.
So that it can comfort its host?
It's the broom, it's the broom, it's the broom, it's the broom.

Mother Mary precious
Mother Mary precious, I can't leave you

Precious, precious oh
Precious, precious, I can't leave you
Father Monsi precious,
Father Monsi precious, I can't leave you

Chorus: Precious, precious oh
Precious, precious, i can't leave you.

Song No 4. CWA wuna Kontinye!

CWA, wuna kontiniu,
God yi deh fo wuna bak oh!
Wuna no tia, wuna kontinyue,
God yi deh fo wuna bak oh!
House of Gold oh, wuna no tia, wuna kontinyue,
God yi deh fo wuna bak oh!
Wuna no tia, wuna kontinyue
God yi deh fo wuna bak oh!

Mother of our Saviour, wuna no tia, wuna kontinyue,
God yi deh fo wuna bak oh!
Wuna no tia, wuna kontinyue
God yi deh fo wuna bak oh!

English Rendering

CWA don't give up,
God is on your side,
Don't give up, keep moving.
God is on your side.

House of Gold, don't give up,
God is on your side,
Don't give up, keep moving.
God is on your side.

Mother of our Saviour, don't give up,
God is on your side,
Don't give up, keep moving.
God is on your side.

Song No. 5 Jolie, jolie je ne le peut pas tes laisser

Jolie, jolie oh
Jolie, jolie je ne le peut pas tes laisser.
Mama Marie jolie,
Mama Marie jolie, je ne le peut pas tes laisser.

Papa Monsi jolie oh
Papa Monsi jolie je ne le peut pas tes laisser
Jolie, jolie
Chorus: Jolie, jolie
Jolie, jolie je ne le peut pas tes laisser.

English Rendering

Precious, precious oh
Precious, precious, I can't leave you